

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, March 8, 1892, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. Florence, March 8th, 1892. My darling Alec:

This is the thirteenth day since you sailed, and I have not heard of your arrival. I had an unsigned telegram from Washington on Sunday, but I do not think it can be from you. I do not see how under the most favorable circumstance you can have reached Washington on Saturday, and you must have done so before I could have received a telegram from you early in the morning of Sunday — No I do not think you wrote it, and I feel much worried. Mr. McCurdy wrote that he had heard of storms off the coast of Portugal just when the Fulda passed through the straights, and though of course you haven't been wrecked there or I would have heard, still they may have delayed you, and even done serious injury. Anyway I want to hear from you, and I want to see you — oh so much. It seems ages since you left.

We were called to dinner, and while there your cable came, — at last. It must have been a stormy passage to last so long, and the news that you are safe is a great relief. I have been expecting that cable so long, my little Italian calendar is growing quite worn with the use I have made of it counting the days until I could hear from you. It seems the longest thirteen days I have spent, for sometime at any rate, and I have little doubt that you have thought the same. I hope you found some other reading matter than the proceedings of the Milan Conference. They were very interesting no doubt, but hardly what you want for your entire literary food. You will have discovered that your dress suit did not return with you, I am so sorry, I quite overlooked it in packing your valise. At all 2 events it was growing shabby and another one is really required. The children have had their game of whist with me, gone through their exercises, and now in bed they are getting thawed out with the

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assistance of the "little priest." It has been colder since we returned than it was in January, and the children do not seem to be really warm from the time they get up until they are again in bed. They continue very well however, and in good spirits. I have engaged an Italian lady to go walking with the children, as she cannot speak English I hope they will have practise in using the language they have acquired under Miss Clark.

We went to call on Mrs. Childs yesterday and there we met a Mrs. Baxter and her daughter Grace, quite a pretty young English lady. This afternoon she wrote to me offering this young lady as Italian governess. She was born and bred here and the language is native to her. She seemed very nice, but I think she is too young, she could hardly be more than twenty if as much, and has had no experience, otherwise I should be tempted to take her. What do you say to my taking Miss Clark, she would come if I did not think her too old.

I saw a picture today which I am very much inclined to buy, two of them in fact, one is a copy of Charles I's children, and is about five hundred dollars delivered all charges paid at New York, and the other is the same price here. The other is an original painting of an Italian peasant family, the eldest boy has rigged up a thread telephone and his mother is listening while he whispers at his end. My only objection is that the picture is so like that other Italian peasant interior we have. I am going to look at the Annual Exhibition which is open here, and at one or two other pictures 3 stores before I decide, but I feel as if that telephone picture ought to be yours. It is very pretty.

This is the first bit of sightseeing we have done. Elsie very strenuously objects doing anything of the kind and it has been so cold I have been willing to humor her.

I went to call on Mrs. Burton, and Alec dear I am shocked at the change, she had a relapse just after you saw her, and now cannot speak or see any one. I saw her for a few minutes, but she said she could not see any one, even Miss Bliss who has charge of her

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children. Miss Bliss says she is very nervous, she looked absolutely colorless, and I think her face is thinner too.

Miss Fanny Clark has not been well since her illness just before you came and is ill again, and so are my cousins as I wrote you. I cannot be too thankful that our children have taken no more cold, but they still cough occasionally. I have been dousing them with half a pitcher of cold water and then rubbing them well, and I really think they are the better for it all day. They seem to enjoy it too. If I could only feel that your surroundings were half as satisfactory as ours.

With a heart full of love always, Yours, Mabel.